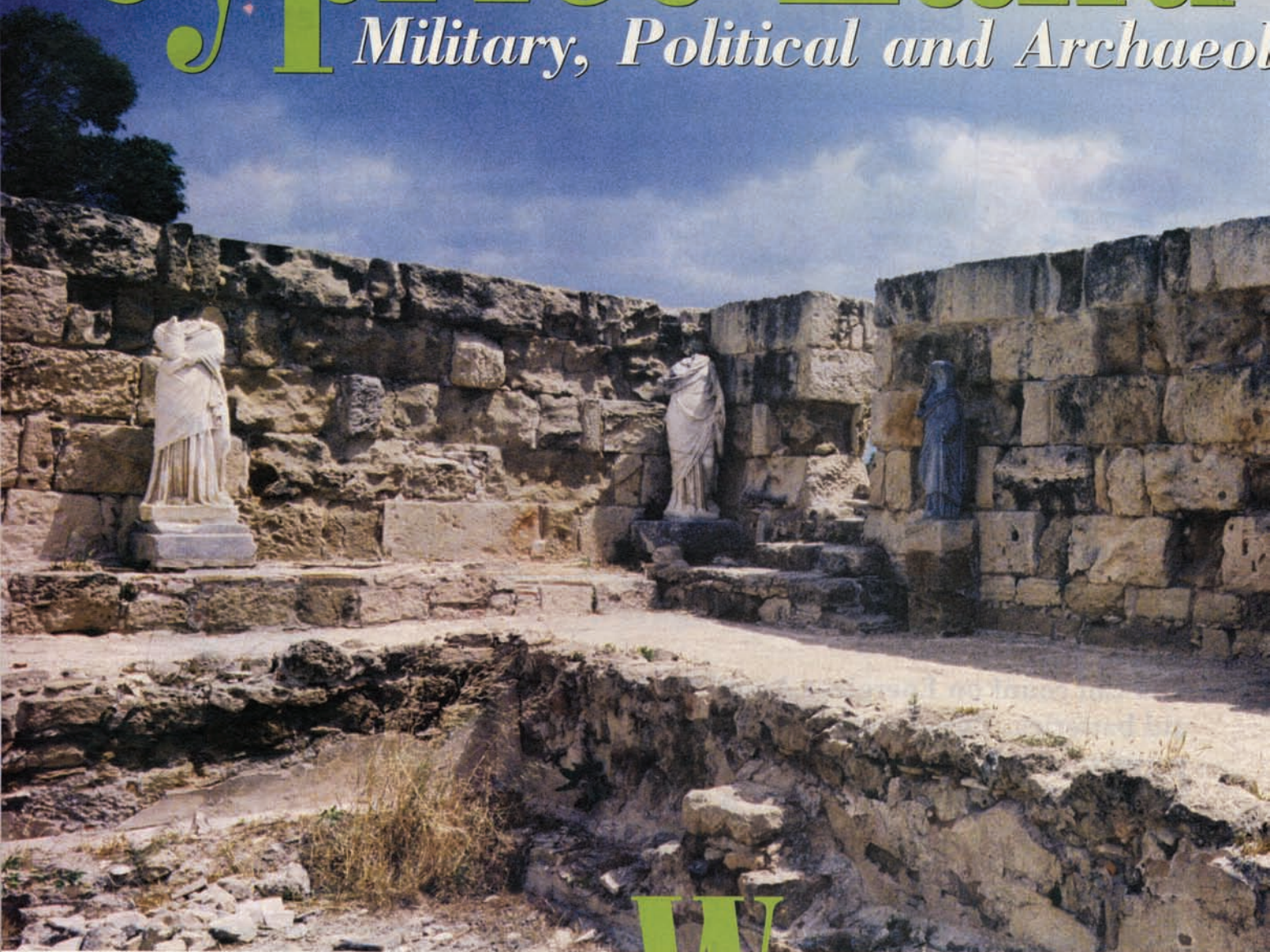




# Cypriot Land

*Military, Political and Archaeological*



HERSHEL SHANKS

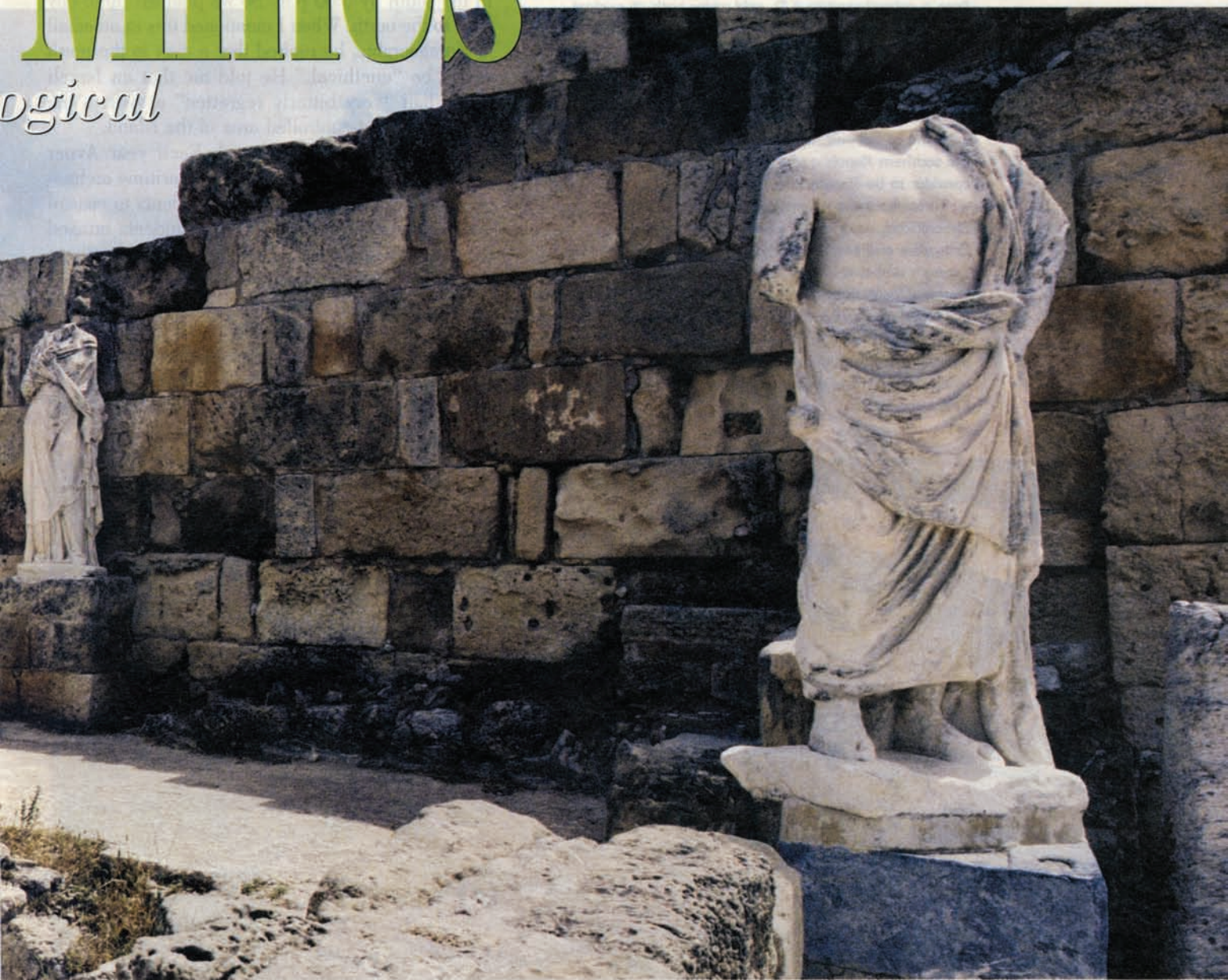
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e couldn't get to the fifth-century B.C. tomb at Pyla, said to be one of the finest of the period, because minefields were being cleared that day and the road was closed. Pyla, on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, lies near the border between the Republic of Cyprus in the south and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which occupies the northern third of the island. According to Giorgos Georgiou, the archaeologist from the Cyprus Department of Antiquities who had been assigned to us that day, the decision to clear the minefield was a result of a



# Mines

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recent rapprochement between the two sides.

But we hit a different kind of mine, a diplomatic one, which blew up in our face.

We had decided to visit the archaeological sites of Cyprus because the most distinguished archaeologist in the country, Vassos Karageorghis—a former director of the department of antiquities, a retired professor at the University of Cyprus and the excavator of Salamis, among many other sites in Cyprus—was a member of *Archaeology Odyssey's* editorial advisory board. Archaeologist Robert Merrillees,

a former Australian ambassador to Israel and now head of the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI), an affiliate of the American Schools of Oriental Research, was also a member of our editorial advisory board. These relationships, I was sure, would enable us easily to get an in-depth appreciation for Cyprus's rich archaeological heritage—from the Neolithic period to the 19th century of our own era.

I knew that Cyprus was politically divided, so I made inquiries as to whether it was possible to visit archaeolog-



Preceding pages: A group of now-headless marble statues lines a second-century A.D. cold-water bath at ancient Salamis, in Cyprus. The original excavations at Salamis, led by Cypriot archaeologist Vassos Karageorghis, were halted in 1974 when Turkey occupied the northern part of the island—including Salamis. Although archaeologists from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have continued to excavate at Salamis, Karageorghis and his colleagues from the southern Republic of Cyprus refuse to enter what they consider to be illegally occupied territory.

Throughout the millennia, conquering peoples—Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Crusaders and Ottoman Turks—have been attracted by Cyprus’s timber and copper resources, as well as by its strategic location in the eastern Mediterranean. The island’s first, Neolithic occupants probably arrived around 7,000 B.C. from north Syria. They have left behind remains of their curvilinear mudbrick homes (shown below and covered by the tent in the photo opposite) at such sites as Kalavassos-Tenta.

ical sites on “the other side.” I was told that we could cross into northern Cyprus through the Nicosia checkpoint on day trips, but that we had to be back in the south by 5:00 p.m. So we planned three day trips to the north. When I mentioned this in an email to Karageorghis, he replied that a visit to the north would be “unethical.” He told me that an Israeli group had “very bitterly regretted” a visit to the Turkish Cypriot-controlled area of the island.

This is what had happened: Each year Avner Raban, head of Haifa University’s maritime archaeology program, leads a cruise of students to coastal archaeological sites. In 2000, the students cruised the southern coast of Turkey, then sailed southeast to visit sites on the northern coast of Cyprus, less than 45 miles from the coast of Turkey. Raban wrote a day-by-day account of the cruise in the program’s newsletter. This so disturbed friends in southern Cyprus, including Karageorghis, that Raban felt obliged to issue an “apology” for, in what must have

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